

VA's Notification Letter to Veterans

Dear Veteran:

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has recently learned that an employee took home electronic data from the VA, which he was not authorized to do and was in violation of established policies. The employee's home was burglarized and this data was stolen. The data contained identifying information including names, social security numbers, and dates of birth for up to 26.5 million veterans and some spouses, as well as some disability ratings. As a result of this incident, information identifiable with you was potentially exposed to others. It is important to note that the affected data did not include any of VA's electronic health records or any financial information.

Appropriate law enforcement agencies, including the FBI and the VA Inspector General's office, have launched full-scale investigations into this matter. Authorities believe it is unlikely the perpetrators targeted the items because of any knowledge of the data contents. It is possible that they remain unaware of the information which they possess or of how to make use of it.

Out of an abundance of caution, however, VA is taking all possible steps to protect and inform our veterans. While you do not need to take any action unless you are aware of suspicious activity regarding your personal information, there are many steps you may take to protect against possible identity theft and we wanted you to be aware of these. Specific information is included in the attached question and answer sheet. For additional information, the VA has teamed up the Federal Trade Commission and has a website (www.firstgov.gov) with information on this matter or you may call 1-800-FED-INFO (1-800-333-4636). The call center will operate from 8 a.m. to 9 p.m. (EDT), Monday-Saturday, as long as it is needed.

We apologize for any inconvenience or concern this situation may cause, but we at the VA believe it is important for you to be fully informed of any potential risk resulting from this incident. Again, we want to reassure you we have no evidence that your protected data has been misused. We will keep you apprised of any further developments. The men and women of the VA take our obligation to honor and serve America's veterans very seriously and we are committed to seeing this never happens again.

Sincerely,

R. James Nicholson
Secretary of Veterans Affairs